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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect was established under provisions of the 1988 Amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (P.L. 100-294). The mission of the Board is to evaluate the nation's efforts to accomplish the purposes of the Act and to make recommendations on ways in which those efforts can be improved. This document is a summary of the Board's first report. In Part I of the report, the Board declares a national emergency, describes the process it went through in determining how to respond to the emergency, and characterizes the response. Part II also contains the Board's description of the nation's public- and private-sector attempts to protect children from maltreatment. These topics are discussed: scope and complexity of the problem of child abuse and neglect and the relationship of the problem to changes in family and community life; nature of the child protection system, including the role of the private sector in the protection system; the crisis in the child protection system and the relationship of government to the crisis; and a proposed program of reform. In the final part of the report, thirty-one recommendations for change are made in these areas: (1) recognizing the national emergency; (2) providing leadership; (3) coordinating efforts; (4) generating knowledge; (5) diffusing knowledge; (6) increasing human resources; (7) providing and improving programs; and (8) planning for the future. (ABL)

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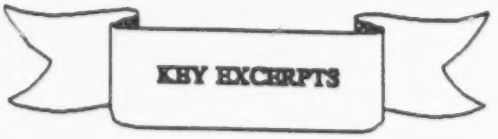
Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Human Development Services
U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT:

CRITICAL FIRST STEPS IN RESPONSE TO A NATIONAL EMERGENCY



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The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect

CG 022704

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August 1990

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect was established under provisions of Public Law 100-294, the 1988 Amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. The mission of the Board is to evaluate the nation's efforts to accomplish the purposes of the Act and to make recommendations on ways in which those efforts can be improved.

This is a summary of the Board's first report. In Part I of the report, the Board declares a national emergency, describes the process it went through in determining how to respond to the emergency, and characterizes the response.

For twenty-five years the nation has become more aware of the magnitude of child abuse and neglect. **The Board has concluded that child abuse and neglect in the United States now represents a national emergency.**

The Board bases this conclusion on three findings: 1) each year **hundreds of thousands** of children are being starved and abandoned, burned and severely beaten, raped and sodomized, berated and belittled; 2) the **system** the nation has devised to respond to child abuse and neglect **is failing**; and 3) the United States spends **billions** of dollars on programs that deal with the **results** of the nation's failure to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.

The American child maltreatment emergency leads the Board to make the following observations:

Not only are child abuse and neglect wrong, but the nation's lack of an effective response to them is also wrong. Neither can be tolerated. Together they constitute a moral disaster.

All Americans share an ethical duty to ensure the safety of children. Protection of children from harm is not just an ethical duty: it is a matter of national survival.

Although some children recover from maltreatment without serious consequences, the evidence is clear that maltreatment often has deleterious effects on children's mental health and development, both short- and long-term.

Although most victims of serious and fatal child abuse are very young, to regard older children and adolescents as invulnerable to the severe consequences of abuse and neglect is a mistake.

All Americans should be outraged by child maltreatment.

The Board believes that the extent of the emergency is so compelling that it dictates an **immediate response.** The Board has decided, therefore, to devote its first report to **alerting the nation** to the existence of the emergency and to recommending 31 **critical first steps** that will provide a **framework** for a decade of review and reconstruction of policies and programs that have exacerbated the emergency.

As important as these 31 critical first steps are, implementing them will only result in controlling the emergency. Once the emergency is brought under control, the Board believes that the nation should commit itself to achieving an equally important goal: the replacement of the existing child protection system with a new, national, child-centered, neighborhood-based child protection strategy.

The Board believes that a new strategy should:

1. Ensure the safety of children;

2. Prevent child maltreatment, whenever possible;

3. Result in timely, sensitive, and accurate investigation and assessment, whenever child maltreatment is suspected or known to have occurred;

4. Result in treatment to ameliorate the effects of abuse and neglect on children;

5. Aim, whenever possible, to rebuild the families whose ties have been frayed by maltreatment; and

6. Assure safe, stable, and nurturing substitute family environments when children are temporarily or permanently unsafe in their biological families.

II. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN AMERICA

In Part II of the report, the Board presents a detailed overview of the problem of child abuse and neglect. Part II also contains the Board's description of the nation's public- and private-sector attempts to protect children from maltreatment.

Scope and Complexity of Child Maltreatment and Its Relationship to Changes in Family and Community Life

The increase in the number of reports of child maltreatment in recent years has been astronomical. In 1974, there were about 60,000 cases reported, a number that rose to 1.1 million in 1980 and more than doubled during the 1980's to 2.4 million. Whether the increase in reports is primarily the result of a change in public awareness or whether it largely reflects actual increases in the incidence of some forms of child maltreatment, the absolute number of substantiated cases has increased at a rate as shocking as the increase in the number of reported cases.

Further, there are reasons to believe that even that number is just a fraction of the actual incidence of child abuse and neglect. Surveys consistently show that large proportions of cases of suspected child maltreatment remain unreported.

Child maltreatment represents the interaction of numerous factors. While all are important, several are especially significant: poverty, ethnicity, neighborhood dysfunction, mental health problems, substance abuse, and the presence of children with special needs.

Although child maltreatment occurs in all socioeconomic and cultural groups, poverty makes child maltreatment much more likely. Reflecting the high rates of poverty among ethnic minorities, minority children enter the child protection system in disproportionately large numbers.

Family structure has undergone marked change in recent years. The annual number of divorces in the United States tripled between 1960 and 1980, with the majority involving children. The proportion of children in married couple families decreased from 87.1 percent in 1970 to 72.7 percent in 1988, with the majority of nonwhite children now living with single parents.

The range of institutions caring for children has become more numerous and diverse. More children than ever before are living away from their biological family. Most mothers of children under age one now work outside the home.

The Nature of the Child Protection System Including the Role of the Private Sector

Although the child protective services (CPS) agency is the one agency that is mandated by law to carry out a comprehensive set of responsibilities related to abused and neglected children, an assessment of society's response to child abuse and neglect must consider the child protection system as a whole. The child protection system is a complex web of social service, legal, law enforcement, mental health, health, educational, and volunteer agencies.

The many elements of the child protection system increase the complexity of the problem. Families in which maltreatment is suspected or is known to have occurred find themselves the objects of action (or inaction) by numerous public agencies that often are poorly coordinated and may have conflicting purposes.

The Board believes that an assessment also must consider the contributions made at all levels of society by the private sector to make the system function more effectively. The voluntary, business, and religious communities engage in important efforts to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.

The Crisis in the Child Protection System and the Relationship of Government to the Crisis

The child protection system has not expanded to meet the challenges posed by the huge increase in cases. That increase has affected law enforcement agencies, juvenile and criminal courts, prosecutor offices, public defender offices, and mental health agencies involved with investigating, adjudicating, or treating maltreated children and their families.

The greatest impact of the changes, however, has been on CPS agencies. In both quantity and content, the work of CPS has become much harder. However, CPS agencies have not been given the resources necessary to cope with the increased responsibilities and the ever-growing number of reports.

In many communities, timely investigation of reports of suspected child maltreatment does not occur. Failure to conduct timely investigations and then to provide services when imminent risk is determined or a postadjudication treatment plan is developed has serious repercussions. Professionals who serve children and families often fail to report suspected cases of child maltreatment because they have no confidence in the capacity of CPS to respond appropriately.

Within each State, not only the integrity of CPS, but that of the entire system of services to children and families has been threatened by the enormous increase in the number of reports without a commensurate increase in resources. In addition to CPS, that larger system includes services related to adoption, foster care, residential care, and other services needed by troubled children and their families. Investigations have taken an increasingly greater proportion of many public children and family services agency budgets.

Despite the heroic efforts of many foster parents, the foster care system is in crisis. The system has been stretched well beyond its capacity. By the end of 1988, 340,000 children lived in 125,000 foster homes, with the number of children in foster care continuing to rise in 1989 and the number of homes decreasing. (The number of children entering various forms of group care also has continued to rise at a rapid pace).

Not only is the system seeing a huge increase in the number of children entering it, but increasing complexity of the problems that these children bring. The population in foster care is increasingly older and more disturbed. Moreover, foster parents often have not been given the support that they need to care for the difficult youngsters whom they have accepted into their families.

The process by which many foster placements occur suggests that the child protection system lacks a focus on children. In some States, children often do not know the name of their CPS caseworker, whom they rarely see. Such children are frequently not involved in decisions about their future, despite evidence that such involvement increases the success of foster placements.

Moreover, most maltreated children, even after they have been identified as such by public authorities, do not receive treatment. They even fail to receive treatment after they have been placed in the custody of the State or County. Frequently, treatment for a maltreated child is determined not by what is needed, but rather by what is available locally.

As serious as the preceding aspects of the crisis are, they do not constitute the full extent of the deficiencies within the child protection system. The background to each of the other deficiencies is presented in Part III of the report.

The response of the Federal Government to child abuse and neglect in recent years dates to actions by the U.S. Children's Bureau in the early 1960's. In 1974, the U.S. Congress passed landmark legislation: the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (Public Law 93-247) which established a National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) as the focal point within the Federal Government for this issue. In 1980, a new Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (Public Law 96-272) tied Federal funding for State child welfare and foster care programs to a requirement of "reasonable efforts" to prevent placements and to reunify families in which placement had occurred.

Today, most public officials at all levels are genuinely concerned about the plight of abused and neglected children and their families. Unfortunately, they are now faced with a crisis of unprecedented proportions in the child protection system. In retrospect, it is clear that government at all levels failed to anticipate the crisis. Sadly, that crisis could have been foreseen. As reports of child maltreatment began to climb throughout the 1970's and to skyrocket in the 1980's, the governmental response was and continues to be fragmented, often simplistic, ill-conceived, crisis oriented, symbolic, and driven by political expediency. Legislative bodies at all levels have tended to focus on narrow issues and have designed piecemeal--as distinguished from comprehensive--solutions.

Throughout the nation, resources remain insufficient to reduce child abuse and neglect significantly. There are not enough staff, funds, training programs, services to special populations, or prevention and treatment services to make the serious reduction of child abuse and neglect a reality.

A Proposed Program of Reform

The Board concludes that, because of the towering problems currently faced by the child protection system, the barriers to its fundamental restructuring are immense. Crisis remediation must precede the implementation of a new strategy. The Board then summons the nation to action by declaring:

America must and can begin now to establish a caring community for those of its children who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

In Part III of the report the Board presents 31 recommendations. They are organized into eight areas: Recognizing the National Emergency; Providing Leadership; Coordinating Efforts; Generating Knowledge; Diffusing Knowledge; Increasing Human Resources; Providing and Improving Programs; and Planning for the Future. A description of each recommendation follows. The complete text of all of the recommendations can be found in Appendix G of Part IV of the report.

Recognizing the National Emergency

The first three recommendations of the Board are shaped by the Board's conviction that addressing the emergency begins with all elements of American society acknowledging their shared responsibility for the emergency. That must then be followed by acceptance of responsibility for remedying the emergency.

In Recommendation #1 the Board urges each citizen to recognize that: (a) very, very large numbers of children are regularly and severely mistreated in and out of their homes by members of their families; (b) the incidence is widespread throughout all reaches of American society; (c) the maltreatment of children has persisted for a very long time; (d) the nation's efforts to treat child victims have been woefully inadequate; and (e) the nation is not doing what it could do to prevent child maltreatment in America.

The Board urges each American to understand that he or she is personally responsible for preventing harm to all the maltreated children of the nation. He or she must join with all other citizens in resolving that the continued existence of child maltreatment is intolerable.

In Recommendation #2 the Board urges each elected official throughout the nation at all levels of government to recognize that the efforts of the civil servants who labor valiantly to curb the maltreatment of children are increasingly being undercut by public child protection programs that have inadequate budgets, shrinking staffs, expanding caseloads, insufficient coordination, and uncertain leadership. These officials should take whatever steps are necessary--including identifying new revenue sources--to rehabilitate the nation's child protection system.

In Recommendation #3 the Board urges the U.S. Congress, State legislatures, and local legislative bodies to recognize that the link between child maltreatment and crime has been established. From this perspective, the effects of societal neglect of low income, vulnerable children and their families have already done more damage to society than any war in which America has been engaged in this century. The Board urges all members of legislatures to view the prevention of child abuse and neglect as a matter of national security and, as such, to increase their support for basic necessities, such as housing, child care, education, and prenatal care for low income families.

Providing Leadership

The next five recommendations are shaped by the Board's conviction that, once responsibility for remediating the emergency is accepted, **greater leadership is required within both the executive and legislative branches of government at all levels.** In addition, **more leadership** needs to be exerted by the **organized scientific and professional communities.**

In **Recommendations #4-6** the Board urges the **President, the Governors of the several States, and the County Executives and Mayors to become the visible and effective leaders** within their respective jurisdictions **in renewed child protection efforts.** Those efforts should focus on preventing the maltreatment of American children and helping the nation better serve those children who have been abused and neglected.

President Bush is urged to consider **addressing the nation, declaring the present crisis in child abuse and neglect to be a national emergency, and calling for a national commitment to respond to it.** The President is also urged to consider **convening a summit conference of the Governors** to begin planning State initiatives on child abuse and neglect and to provide recommendations to the President and the U.S. Congress on Federal actions that would assist the States in their efforts to respond to this national emergency.

In **Recommendation #7** the Board urges the **U.S. Congress, State legislatures, and local legislative bodies** to **provide sufficient funding for child abuse and neglect efforts.** Having noted that the Congress has made clear its willingness to honor commitments in other areas, the Board reminds legislators that providing adequate funding for the protection of children from abuse and neglect constitutes the fulfillment of a commitment equal in importance to the nation's future as, for example, rescuing its banking system.

Because scientific societies and professional organizations are especially influential in the formation and review of child and family policy, in **Recommendation #8** the Board urges such societies and organizations to **respond to the emergency at a level commensurate with its seriousness.** Scientific societies are urged to stimulate and synthesize needed research. Professional organizations are urged to provide guidance to their members on the complex issues involved with practice related to child maltreatment and to encourage their members' active involvement with the problem. Both the societies and organizations are urged to participate in educating the public.

Coordinating Efforts

The next three recommendations are shaped by the Board's conviction that corollary to the exercise of more leadership is the **more effective coordination of existing and proposed efforts.** At the Federal level, at least 31 programs are significantly involved in some aspect(s) of the Federal effort on child maltreatment. The Federal experience is mirrored, indeed amplified, within State and local governments.

The reality for much of the country is that agencies responsible for responding to reported child maltreatment cases often have not worked well together, have not shared information needed to protect children, and have failed to develop inter-agency agreements to ensure that case coordination occurs. Federal and State funding has provided inadequate incentives to improve coordination or eliminate roadblocks to effective inter-agency cooperation. In **Recommendation #9** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services,** working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the **Governors of the several States identify and eliminate barriers** which stand in the way of providing **coordinated community services related to the protection of children.**

In **Recommendation #10** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services**, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the **Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the White House** assure that **all relevant aspects of the Federal, State, and local effort to control substance abuse are coordinated with efforts to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.** Implicit in the recommendation is the knowledge that coordination between substance abuse specialists, child protection professionals, and public health and legal experts is vital to developing sound public policies in this area.

In **Recommendation #11** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services** and the **Attorney General**, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, undertake **joint efforts** to address the issue of **fatal child abuse and neglect** caused by family members and other caretakers. These efforts should include the identification and vigorous **dissemination to State and local governments of models for more effective coordination** at the State and local levels of government.

Generating Knowledge

The next four recommendations are shaped by the Board's conviction that **good policy begins with good facts.** Although America knows more about child abuse and neglect today than any society in history has ever known, there are **significant gaps in the nation's knowledge base.**

In **Recommendation #12** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services** and the **Attorney General**, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, take whatever steps are necessary to **establish** a Federal **data collection system** that provides a comprehensive national picture of child maltreatment and the response to it by the several governments of the United States. The **new system** should reflect not only the **social services dimensions** of the problem but the **public health, mental health, and legal/judicial dimensions**, as well.

Gaps in knowledge exist for several reasons that can be significantly reduced. In **Recommendation #13** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services** launch a **major coordinated initiative** involving all relevant components of the Department of Health and Human Services to **promote the systematic conduct of research** related to child abuse and neglect.

Much more can be done to build knowledge about what works. In **Recommendation #14** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services**, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, launch a **major coordinated initiative** to use multidisciplinary **knowledge about what works** as the cornerstone of Federal efforts to **rehabilitate** the quality of the **child protection system**.

Both the number and the professional qualifications of individuals conducting knowledge-building activities on child abuse and neglect should be increased. In **Recommendation #15** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services**, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, **in concert with the nation's private foundations that have an interest in children**, launch a **major initiative** to accomplish that objective.

Diffusing Knowledge

Knowledge that is generated but unpublicized is of little practical use. Although the study of child abuse and neglect has generated much knowledge of potential use to practitioners, policymakers, and the general public, little of that knowledge has reached those audiences. To address this issue, the Federal Government has tried various approaches. Unfortunately, none now in place have sufficiently met the tremendous need for state-of-the-art knowledge.

In **Recommendation #16** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services,** working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, take whatever steps are necessary to **assure** that **practitioners, policymakers,** and the **general public (especially parents)** have ready and continuous **access** to comprehensive, consistent state-of-the-art **information** on child abuse and neglect. Such steps should include **establishing** a **permanent governmental unit** from which this information is available.

In **Recommendation #17** the Board proposes that **associations of journalists, broadcast executives, publishers, public relations firms, deans and faculty of schools of journalism,** as well as **individual media outlets**--join in a **campaign to promote public understanding** of the child protection emergency and the most effective ways of addressing it. The media have taught the public that child maltreatment exists. Now it is time for urgently worded but carefully researched news stories about the emergency.

Increasing Human Resources

The next six recommendations are shaped by the Board's conviction that, intrinsic to the **crisis** in the child protection system, are the **status, qualifications, training, workload, and representativeness of public agency CPS caseworkers.** Also of great importance is the need for **better professional preparation of other specialists** in the child protection system.

The CPS worker of today was unknown just 20 years ago. People who work in public CPS agencies are often at the lower end of prestige and salary scales. Many become overwhelmed, discouraged, and burned out. They often quickly leave the agency. To address this problem, in **Recommendation #18** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress,** their **counterparts in State governments,** and the **Governors** of the several States, **in concert with professional associations and organizations,** take concrete steps to **establish the position of public agency "child protective services caseworker"** as a **professional specialty** with commensurate minimum entry-level educational requirements, salary, status, supervision, administrative support, and continuing education requirements.

Tragically, in most of the country a CPS caseworker need <u>not</u> possess either a master's or bachelor's degree in social work. Because the Federal Government plays such a large role in the financing of State and County CPS agencies, it can contribute to the effort to upgrade the qualifications of personnel by establishing minimum educational requirements as a condition of Federal financial participation. In **Recommendation #19** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services,** the **U.S. Congress,** and their **counterparts in State governments** take the necessary steps to **establish minimum educational requirements** for the **position of public agency CPS caseworker** in agencies which receive Federal financial support. Such requirements should provide for the **substitution of experience** for education.

In recent years, much more attention has been given to providing pre-service and in-service structured education for the front-line CPS caseworker. By and large, however, such training has been neither constant nor consistent. To address this problem, in **Recommendation #20** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services,** the **U.S. Congress,** and their **counterparts in State governments** take the necessary steps to **assure** that all **public agency CPS caseworkers** systematically receive adequate **pre-service and in-service continuing training** for the proper performance of their duties.

Although CPS agencies have done heroic work in trying to keep pace with the virtual flood of increased reports, the caseloads in many agencies are **two or three times** above a manageable level. While some States have appropriated additional funds for CPS agencies to increase the numbers of workers and decrease the size of caseloads, many CPS agencies have been particularly hard hit by government funding cutbacks and have become dangerously understaffed. To address this problem, in **Recommendation #21** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services,** the **U.S. Congress,** and their **counterparts at the State and County levels, in concert with private sector support,** should take the necessary steps to **establish acceptable caseload standards** so as to reduce the caseload sizes of public agency CPS caseworkers in agencies which receive Federal financial support.

The present work force in public CPS agencies is not representative of the social, economic, cultural, and racial characteristics of agency caseloads. To achieve a higher level of competence in the minority and cultural arena, in **Recommendation #22** the Board proposes that **State and local social services officials** launch an aggressive **campaign** to **recruit new CPS caseworkers representative of the racial, ethnic, and cultural composition** of the child maltreatment **caseload population.**

Physicians, social workers, judges, and attorneys commonly enter the field without any formal education on child maltreatment. To address this problem, in **Recommendation #23** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services** and the **Secretary of Education,** working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, take several specified steps to **assure a steady increase** in the **total number** of the nation's **professionals** who possess the necessary **competence and skill** to participate effectively in the **protection of children,** including the establishment of a new Federal fellowship program.

Providing and Improving Programs

The next six recommendations are shaped by the Board's conviction that both **treatment** as well as **prevention** efforts need to be and can be significantly strengthened. Special attention is also called to the **roles** of the **private sector, the judicial system,** and the **educational system** in the protection of children.

As child abuse and neglect reports have skyrocketed, State and County child welfare agencies have been able to provide treatment to only a fraction of those children who need it. State and County child welfare programs have not been designed to get immediate help to families based on voluntary requests for assistance. Thus, it has become far easier to report one's neighbor for child abuse than it is for that neighbor to request and receive help before the abuse happens. In **Recommendation #24** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services,** working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the **Governors of the several States ensure** that **more resources** are allocated to establishing voluntary, non-punitive access to help.

At its root, child protection is preventive--protection of children from further harm when maltreatment has occurred, and, ideally, prevention of maltreatment altogether. The best documented preventive efforts are for home visitation services for families of infants, which are universal in many developed countries but are not now widely available anywhere in the United States. In **Recommendation #25** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Health and Human Services**, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the **Governors of the several States ensure that efforts to prevent** the maltreatment of children are **substantially increased.** Such efforts, at a minimum, should involve a **significant expansion** in the availability of **home visitation and follow-up services for all families of newborns.**

Too often advocates for a greater emphasis on prevention, or a greater emphasis on treatment, have battled to expand the approach they favor at the expense of each other. In **Recommendation #26** the Board proposes that, to the extent that the **U.S. Congress** and **State and local legislative bodies** determine that resources devoted to child maltreatment should be expanded, they **assure** that **resources devoted to prevention** and **resources devoted to treatment** do **not** come at the **expense of each other.**

"Public/private partnerships" are now considered, by many, to be the most effective way out of many overwhelmingly difficult and expensive societal predicaments. Child abuse and neglect is a problem of such magnitude and complexity that significant cooperation between the public and private sectors is essential, if it is to be remediated. In **Recommendation #27** the Board proposes that the headquarters or regional units of **private sector organizations** take several specified steps to **increase significantly** the **involvement** of their **local affiliates and outlets, members,** or **employees** in **child protection efforts.**

Government at all levels should facilitate the development of **public/private partnerships** aimed at enhancing the role of the private sector in the **prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.**

Over the last decade, many court systems have been overwhelmed by the number and complexity of child abuse and neglect related cases that require judicial intervention after an investigation is completed. Much more also remains to be done to help assure that all abused and neglected children who have their cases heard in the judicial system have the benefit of independent advocacy. In **Recommendation #28** the Board proposes that the **Attorney General, the U.S. Congress, the State legislatures, the Chief Justice of each State's highest court, and the leaders of the organized bar** take several specified steps to assure that **all State and local courts** handling the large numbers of civil and criminal child abuse and neglect cases coming before the court system promptly and fairly resolve these cases. These officials should also take steps to assure that every child has independent advocacy and legal representation throughout the judicial process, and that CPS caseworkers are represented by counsel throughout the judicial process.

The educational system could be an essential part of a multidisciplinary approach to the protection of children. For schools to accomplish that will require: greater leadership from their school boards, PTAs, and the Federal, State, and local governments; technical assistance from educational organizations; and considerably enhanced financial resources. In **Recommendation #29** the Board proposes that the **Secretary of Education and his counterparts in State and local educational agencies, in concert with the leaders of all relevant national educational organizations and their State and local affiliates, launch a major initiative to establish and strengthen the role of every public and private school in the nation in the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.**

Planning for the Future

The final two recommendations are shaped by the Board's intention during the years ahead to design and propose a new national strategy for the protection of children. The current planning efforts called for in the two recommendations can serve as companion efforts to the long-range planning inherent in the design of a new strategy, as well as potent responses to the present emergency in child protection.

Knowledge is needed about the cost of implementing for the first time in America a comprehensive program for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Political realities in today's tight fiscal context also require that legislative bodies carefully document the costs of not developing and implementing such a program. Comprehensive estimates in either instance are not now available. In Recommendation #30 the Board proposes that the U.S. Congress direct an appropriate research agency to determine the cost of developing and implementing a comprehensive national program for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, as well as the projected cost of not developing and implementing such a program.

To date, there have been no long-term, comprehensive Federal or State plans to reduce child abuse and neglect or to ameliorate their effects when they occur. In Recommendation #31 the Board proposes that the Secretary of Health and Human Services, working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, in concert with the National Governors Association, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National Association of Counties, develop a model planning process aimed at generating plans for the coordinated, comprehensive, community-based prevention, identification, and treatment of abuse and neglect. Appropriate steps should be taken to assure that the model process is implemented throughout the nation.

IV. APPENDICES

In Part IV of the report the Board presents descriptive information about its statutory basis, its composition, its committees, the staff and other forms of support it was provided, and its activities to date. The Appendix which describes the activities of the Board contains lists of the witnesses who testified before the Board.

CONCLUSION

In presenting its first report to the nation, the Board has attempted to provide direction, vision, and leadership. The Board expects that its recommendations will serve as the impetus for much-needed action to address the national emergency.

APPENDIX G: Recommendations: First Report Of The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY

RECOMMENDATION #1:

The Board urges each citizen to recognize that a serious emergency related to the maltreatment of children exists within American society and to join with all other citizens in resolving that its continued existence is intolerable.

RECOMMENDATION #2:

The Board urges each citizen to demand that his or her elected officials at all levels publicly acknowledge that the American child protection emergency exists, and, having so acknowledged this emergency, take whatever steps are necessary–including the identification of new revenue sources–to rehabilitate the nation's child protection system.

RECOMMENDATION #3:

The Board urges the U.S. Congress, State legislatures, and local legislative bodies to view the prevention of child abuse and neglect as a matter of national security and, as such, to increase their support for basic necessities, such as housing, child care, education, and prenatal care for low income families including the working poor, the absence of which has been linked to child abuse and neglect.

B. PROVIDING LEADERSHIP

RECOMMENDATION #4:

The Board urges the President to become the visible and effective leader of a renewed Federal effort to prevent the maltreatment of American children and to help the nation better serve those children who have been abused and neglected.

RECOMMENDATION #5:

The Board urges each Governor to become the visible and effective leader of a renewed State effort to prevent the maltreatment of children and to assure that child victims of abuse and neglect receive appropriate services.

RECOMMENDATION #6:

The Board urges each Mayor and County Executive to become personally involved in improving the delivery of services related to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #7:

The Board urges legislative bodies at all levels to join with the President, Governors, and County Executives and Mayors in a renewed national commitment to child protection by providing the funds necessary to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #8:

The Board urges national scientific societies and professional associations to undertake major initiatives to stimulate the development of knowledge about child abuse and neglect and the improvement of the child protection system and to diffuse such knowledge to their members, policymakers, and the general public.

C. COORDINATING EFFORTS

RECOMMENDATION #9:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts within the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Governors of the several States should identify and eliminate barriers which stand in the way of providing coordinated community services related to the protection of children.

RECOMMENDATION #10:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the White House should take steps to assure that all relevant aspects of the national effort to control substance abuse are coordinated with efforts to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. These steps should begin immediately and should be made apparent to the public. All steps taken at the national level should be coordinated with relevant State and local "front-line" programs.

RECOMMENDATION #11:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect) should undertake joint efforts to address the issue of fatal child abuse and neglect caused by family members and other caretakers. These efforts should include the identification and vigorous dissemination to State and local governments of models for: (a) prevention of serious and fatal child abuse and neglect; (b) multidisciplinary child death case review; and (c) identification and response to child abuse and neglect fatalities by the social services, public health, and criminal justice systems.

D. GENERATING KNOWLEDGE

RECOMMENDATION #12:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect) should take whatever steps are necessary to establish a Federal data collection system that provides a comprehensive national picture of child maltreatment and the response to it by the several governments of the United States. This new system should insure: accurate, annual, uninterrupted, consistent, and timely data collection; mandatory participation from the States; and a focus on actual incidence, reported incidence, and the operation and effectiveness of all aspects of the child protection system. This new system should be designed and implemented either by the Bureau of the Census or the Centers for Disease Control, working in collaboration with leading experts on child maltreatment.

RECOMMENDATION #13:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services should launch a major coordinated initiative involving all relevant components of the Department of Health and Human Services to promote the systematic conduct of research related to child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #14:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), should launch a major initiative to use multidisciplinary knowledge about what works as the cornerstone of Federal efforts to rehabilitate the quality of the child protection system. This initiative should include the translation of what is already known about interventions that produce positive results. It should also include the evaluation of possible systemic improvements the value of which has not yet been established.

RECOMMENDATION #15:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), in concert with the nation's private foundations that have an interest in children, should launch a major initiative to increase both the number and the professional qualifications of individuals conducting knowledge-building activities on child abuse and neglect. The initiative should include the active encouragement of noted researchers from other fields in the social, behavioral, and health sciences to do work in this area.

E. DIFFUSING KNOWLEDGE

RECOMMENDATION #16:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), should take whatever steps are necessary to assure that practitioners, policymakers, and the general public (especially parents) have ready and continuous access to comprehensive, consistent state-of-the-art information on child abuse and neglect. Such steps should include establishing a permanent governmental unit from which this information is available.

RECOMMENDATION #17:

Leaders of the media should join in a campaign to promote public understanding of the child protection emergency and the most effective ways of addressing it, including coverage of the complexity and seriousness of the emergency and the alternatives for dealing with it.

F. INCREASING HUMAN RESOURCES

RECOMMENDATION #18:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, their counterparts in State governments, and the Governors of the several States, in concert with professional associations and organizations, should take concrete steps to establish the position of public agency "child protective services caseworker" as a professional specialty with commensurate minimum entry-level educational requirements, salary, status, supervision, administrative support, and continuing education requirements.

RECOMMENDATION #19:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, and their counterparts in State governments should take the necessary steps to establish minimum educational requirements for the position of public agency CPS caseworker in agencies which receive Federal financial support. Such requirements should provide for the substitution of appropriate experience for education.

RECOMMENDATION #20:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, and their counterparts in State governments should take the necessary steps to assure that all public agency CPS caseworkers systematically receive adequate pre-service and in-service continuing training for the proper performance of their duties. Such training should be offered at different levels in keeping with the differing needs and responsibilities of CPS caseworkers, and should reflect emerging issues in the field.

RECOMMENDATION #21:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, and their counterparts at the State and County levels, in concert with private sector support should take the necessary steps to establish acceptable caseload standards so as to reduce the caseload sizes of public agency CPS caseworkers in agencies which receive Federal financial support. A part of this initiative should be the recruitment and maintenance of a sufficient number of qualified staff so that services can be provided at the acceptable caseload level.

RECOMMENDATION #22:

State and local social services officials should launch an aggressive campaign to recruit new CPS caseworkers representative of the racial, ethnic, and cultural composition of the child maltreatment caseload population.

RECOMMENDATION #23:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect) should take concrete steps to assure a steady increase in the total number of the nation's professionals who possess the necessary competence and skill to participate effectively in the protection of children. Such steps should include: the development, introduction and expansion of curricula and clinical programs concerned with child abuse and neglect in all the nation's institutions of higher learning; the replication and institutionalization of models for the interdisciplinary training of graduate students preparing for work in child protection; and the establishment of a new program of Presidential or Secretarial Child Maltreatment Fellowships for graduate students willing to commit themselves to entering the field.

G. PROVIDING AND IMPROVING PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATION #24:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Governors of the several States should ensure that comprehensive, multidisciplinary child abuse and neglect treatment programs are available to all who need them.

RECOMMENDATION #25:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Governors of the several States should ensure that efforts to prevent the maltreatment of children are substantially increased. Such efforts, at a minimum, should involve a significant expansion in the availability of home visitation and follow-up services for all families of newborns.

RECOMMENDATION #26:

The U.S. Congress and State and local legislative bodies should ensure that, in any expansion of programs concerned with child abuse and neglect, resources devoted to prevention and resources devoted to treatment do not come at the expense of each other.

RECOMMENDATION #27:

The headquarters or regional units of private sector organizations–voluntary, religious, civic, philanthropic, and entrepreneurial–should take the necessary steps to increase significantly the involvement of their local affiliates and outlets, members, or employees in efforts to support and strengthen families as well as to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. At a minimum the efforts for which increased involvement is encouraged should include: participation in neighborhood home visitation networks; participation in formal volunteer programs; the introduction of workplace measures aimed at reducing familial stress; participation in programs aimed at increasing greater accountability within the child protection system; and the promotion of greater awareness of the child protection emergency, as well as advocacy for more enlightened public policies in response to it. Government at all levels should facilitate the development of public/private partnerships aimed at enhancing the role of the private sector in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #28:

The Attorney General, the U.S. Congress, the State legislatures, the Chief Justice of each State's highest court, and the leaders of the organized bar should assure that all State and local courts handling the large numbers of civil and criminal child abuse and neglect cases coming before the court system promptly and fairly resolve these cases. Prompt and fair resolution will require sufficient resources including: (a) adequate numbers of well-trained judges, lawyers, and court support staff, as well as manageable caseloads that take into account the complex and demanding nature of child abuse and neglect litigation; (b) specialized judicial procedures that are sensitive to the needs of children and families; (c) improved court-based diagnostic and evaluation services; and (d) greater educational opportunities for all professional personnel involved in such proceedings. Courts hearing child maltreatment cases must also be given the funding and status befitting these most important of judicial tribunals. These officials should also take steps to assure that every child has independent advocacy and legal representation, and every CPS caseworker is effectively represented by counsel throughout the judicial process.

RECOMMENDATION #29:

The Secretary of Education and his counterparts in State and local educational agencies, in concert with the leaders of all relevant national educational organizations and their State and local affiliates, should launch a major initiative to establish and strengthen the role of every public and private school in the nation in the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

H. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

RECOMMENDATION #30:

The U.S. Congress should direct an appropriate research agency to determine the cost of developing and implementing a comprehensive national program for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, as well as the projected cost of not developing and implementing such a program.

RECOMMENDATION #31:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), in concert with the National Governors Association, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National Association of Counties, should develop a model planning process aimed at generating plans for the coordinated, comprehensive, community-based prevention, identification, and treatment of abuse and neglect, and take appropriate steps to assure that the model process is implemented throughout the nation.

The views expressed in this document are those of the members of the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect and do not necessarily reflect the views of any part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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